

# Interpretation of Xi Jinping's Exposition on the Spiritual Independence of the Chinese Nation

Chen Wang<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> School of Marxism, Central University of Finance and Economics, Beijing, China

Correspondence: Chen Wang, School of Marxism, Central University of Finance and Economics, Beijing, China.

Received: November 19, 2020

Accepted: January 11, 2021

Available online: February 8, 2021

doi:10.11114/ijsss.v9i2.5155

URL: <https://doi.org/10.11114/ijsss.v9i2.5155>

## Abstract

Xi Jinping has three important conclusions about the spiritual independence of the Chinese nation, namely, the independence of the national spirit is the foundation of a country's political, ideological, cultural and institutional independence; Cultural self-confidence is a big issue concerning the independence of the national spirit. Socialist core values and Four Self-confidences are important supports to maintain the independence of the national spirit. The proposal of spiritual independence of the Chinese nation not only embodies the Chinese nation's high self-consciousness and self-determination in spiritual independence, but also strengthens the basic idea that the Chinese nation adheres to independence in opening to the outside world. Furthermore, it shows that the Chinese nation upholds the basic proposition of respecting the independence of every nation and country in the world.

**Keywords:** Chinese nation, spiritual independence, Xi Jinping

## 1. Introduction

The independence of the national spirit is a great event concerning the rise and fall of the national movement. It describes and reflects a nation's spiritual performance in understanding, evaluating and coping with problems, that is, a nation community's self-conscious, independent and free mental state in terms of thinking methods, values and practice choices. The spiritual independence of a nation is not always rising, but needs to be maintained constantly. From the perspective of the long-term development of the nation and the country, Xi Jinping raised the issue of the spiritual independence of the Chinese nation with a high degree of cultural consciousness and discussed it in three speeches. It is not only a new formulation in the ideological and cultural field in the general sense, but also contains profound political implications.

## 2. National Spiritual Independence Is the Foundation of a Country's Political, Ideological, Cultural and Institutional Independence

On February 17, 2014, Xi Jinping first raised the issue of national spiritual independence in his speech at the opening ceremony of the seminar on studying and implementing the spirit of the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee, pointing out that if our people can't adhere to the moral values formed and developed in our country, and blindly become the echo of western moral values without distinction, then it is really necessary to ask whether our country and nation will lose their spiritual independence. If you don't have your own spiritual independence, then the independence of politics, thought, culture and system will be drawn from the bottom (Xi, 2014). From this discussion, we can analyze three important conclusions in depth: Firstly, China should pay enough attention to its own traditions and adhere to and develop the moral values owned by the Chinese nation itself, instead of indiscriminately and blindly thinking that the moral values of the West are superior to China, and cannot become the echo of the West in this field; Secondly, moral values have an important influence on the spiritual development of a country and a nation, so we should pay attention to the development direction of moral values; Thirdly, the independence of the national spirit is particularly important, which is the foundation of a country's political, ideological, cultural and institutional independence. From the above judgment and analysis, it can be seen that Xi Jinping is very concerned about the independence of the national spirit and regards it as a key issue for the development of a country and a nation.

National spiritual independence means that a nation does not depend on other countries or nations in spirit, which is the foundation of a country's independence and the key to its future and destiny. A nation's self-reliance and

self-improvement cannot be separated from its own spiritual strength, which can never be achieved by attaching itself to other countries and nations. Once we voluntarily give up our spiritual independence, the Chinese nation will not be able to stand upright and forge ahead in the torrent of history, and will inevitably lead to the fate of being suppressed, assimilated and even enslaved by other nations and countries. For China, there is absolutely no future if it takes the western world as its beauty, follows the footsteps of others, and is keen on de-idealization, de-value-ization, de-historicization, de-Sinicization and de-mainstreaming (Xi,2015).It is because of that Xi Jinping believes that the Communist Party of China has led the Chinese nation in various historical periods of revolution, construction and reform since its founding, and persisted in starting from China's national conditions, exploring and forming a new-democratic revolutionary road, a road of socialist transformation and construction, and a road of socialism with Chinese characteristics that are in line with China's reality. This independent spirit of exploration and this firm determination to stick to its own path are the true meaning of our party's constant awakening from setbacks and constant progress from victory to victory (Xi,2019). The successful practice of China's revolution, construction and reform is not simply to imitate and copy a certain country, but to make a choice based on the actual consideration of one's own national conditions, and finally walk out of one's own path. Therefore, in China, a big country with a history of more than 5,000 years of civilization and a population of more than 1.3 billion, there is no textbook that can be regarded as the golden rule, and there is no teacher who can dictate to the Chinese people (Xi,2018). In this exploration of adhering to independence, it is inevitable that the Chinese nation will maintain its independence. At the same time, the success of this exploration is also the embodiment of the spiritual independence value of the Chinese nation.

In his exposition, Xi Jinping raised the important issue of whether the Chinese nation will lose its spiritual independence. This question shows that a nation's spiritual independence may be lost, and it is not a rising state of mind. There is a gap between what it should be and what it is. If we do not pay attention to the maintenance and preservation, a nation and a country will lose their spiritual independence. Like the values of the same nation, the problem of spiritual independence exists not only in the relatively abstract consciousness level, but also in all aspects of people's real life practice. For example, the westernization in the ideological field, the disputes between technology, industry and trade in the economic field, the phenomena of being proud of foreign countries and arrogant customs in the cultural field, and the remarks that people always send out "China is the biggest loser" on the Internet when they look at China's diplomatic events. The reason why these remarks or behaviors still have a market, and even can form a hot spot in the field of public opinion, is related to the lack of the spiritual independence of the Chinese nation.

### **3. Cultural Self-Confidence is a Big Issue Concerning the Independence of National Spirit**

In November 2016, when Xi Jinping talked about the significance of cultural self-confidence in his speech at the opening ceremony of the Tenth National Congress of the Chinese Federation of Literary and Art Circles and the Ninth National Congress of the Chinese Writers Association, he pointed out that strengthening cultural self-confidence is a big issue concerning the rise and fall of the national movement, cultural security and the independence of the national spirit (Xi, 2017). From this discussion, it not only emphasizes that cultural self-confidence is an extremely important influencing factor of national spiritual independence, but also finds that national spiritual independence is juxtaposed with the rise and fall of national movement and cultural security, and its importance can be seen.

Cultural self-confidence is a major issue concerning the independence of national spirit, which provides a concrete support point for the theoretical interpretation of national spirit independence and a practical path for maintaining and promoting the spiritual independence of the Chinese nation in practice. Strengthening cultural self-confidence refers to strengthening self-confidence in socialist culture with Chinese characteristics. Specifically, it is self-confidence in Chinese excellent traditional culture bred in the development of civilization for more than 5,000 years, revolutionary culture and advanced socialist culture bred in the great struggle of the party and the people. This culture accumulates the deepest spiritual pursuit of the Chinese nation and represents the unique spiritual identity of the Chinese nation (Xi, 2018). This spiritual pursuit and spiritual symbol which come down in one continuous line and keep pace with the times in the past 5,000 years has constructed the unique spiritual world of the Chinese nation. The unique spiritual world constitutes the foundation of the existence of the spiritual independence of the Chinese nation. Once the cultural self-confidence of the Chinese nation is shaken and the uniqueness of its existence is denied, the Chinese nation will inevitably lose its spiritual distinction with other nations and eventually lose its national spiritual independence.

From Xi Jinping's discourses on cultural self-confidence, we can further find that spiritual independence not only emphasizes spiritual uniqueness, but also emphasizes spiritual autonomy. Cultural self-confidence is not to stick to the existing culture, but to creatively transform and innovate the culture. Every civilization continues the spiritual

blood of a country and nation. It needs to be passed down from generation to generation, guarded from generation to generation, and needs to keep pace with the times and be brave in innovation (Xi,2017). The Chinese nation has a distinct and unique cultural tradition. However, immersed in the glory of the past will inevitably lead to decline. History has proved that a culture that is complacent and conformist has no future. To strengthen cultural self-confidence, we should stick to the Chinese cultural stand and inherit and develop Chinese culture. In terms of the orientation of cultural development, Xi Jinping made a more detailed explanation, arguing that it is not a simple retro, nor a blind exclusion, but a dialectical choice, innovation, rejection of negative factors, inheritance of positive thoughts, opening up one's own life according to the rules of the ancients, and realizing the creative transformation and innovative development of Chinese culture (Xi,2015). In cultural development, we should absorb and surpass "ancient" and "foreign", and develop "new" on the basis of both, which undoubtedly emphasizes independent innovation in cultural development. Therefore, to support a nation's spiritual independence with cultural self-confidence, we should not only emphasize that a nation's spiritual uniqueness cannot be lost, but also pay attention to spiritual autonomy.

#### **4. Socialist Core Values and Four Self-Confidences Are Important Supports for Maintaining the Independence of National Spirit**

In December 2016, Xi Jinping pointed out in his speech at the National Conference on Ideological and Political Work in Colleges and Universities that cultivating and carrying forward the core values of socialism and enhancing the road self-confidence, theoretical self-confidence, institutional self-confidence and cultural self-confidence of socialism with Chinese characteristics are important supports for maintaining the independence of national spirit (Xi, 2017). It is a more in-depth interpretation based on the discussion of the relationship between cultural self-confidence and national spiritual independence, and proposes that socialist core values and Four Self-confidence are the two support points of national spiritual independence. If we examine these two points separately in theory, cultivating and carrying forward socialist core values can be included in the larger category of enhancing cultural self-confidence. However, from the relationship between these two points and maintaining the independence of national spirit, socialist core values and Four Self-confidences respectively act on the values of the same origin and the thinking method of seeking truth from facts, which together provide support for maintaining the spiritual independence of the Chinese nation.

Cultivating and carrying forward the socialist core values is the persistence and development of the values of the Chinese nation, and provides support for the spiritual independence of the Chinese nation. The values of a country and nation can be diverse, but its core values are unique. As the core of the whole social spiritual ideology, it plays a central role in the ideological and cultural field of the whole society. The socialist core values have a profound historical heritage and a solid realistic foundation. The values it advocates have strong moral power, and the direction it shows is in line with the beautiful vision of the Chinese people (Xi, 2017). The core values of socialism contain the value essence of Chinese traditional culture, and provide support for the uniqueness of the formation of the Chinese national spirit with profound historical precipitation; Socialist core values reflect the value needs of the spiritual and cultural development of contemporary Chinese people, and provide a basis for the development of the Chinese national spirit with a solid realistic foundation; Socialist core values show the value expectation contained in the Chinese people's beautiful vision, and depict the Chinese nation's demands for its own spiritual development in the future. Socialist core values are the concrete expression of the values of the Chinese nation in the contemporary era, and are the key to the spiritual independence of this nation. The core values embody the standard for this nation to evaluate problems and judge the right and wrong. If this standard is set by the other, or directly give up its own value judgment and take the judgment of others as the standard, then this nation must be spiritually attached to the other.

Strengthening the Four Self-confidences provides the premise and guidance for the Chinese nation to understand the problems by seeking truth from facts, and then provides support for maintaining the spiritual independence of the Chinese nation. On the one hand, enhancing the Four Self-confidences can make the Chinese nation more sure of its own development achievements and future road, so that it can recognize problems with a more positive attitude and realistic thinking method in the face of difficulties and challenges, and then support the spiritual independence of the Chinese nation. To realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, we must not only stay on the general understanding of the practice of socialism with Chinese characteristics, but also complete the transformation to the road, theory, system and culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics. This cognitive change determines whether we can fully affirm our own development in terms of ideological understanding and mental state when summing up the past, knowing the present and looking forward to the future, and whether we can clarify our own advantages in the face of new opportunities and challenges. Affirming self-development provides a more positive attitude for the Chinese nation when facing difficulties and challenges, and clarifying its

own advantages provides a basic premise for understanding problems by seeking truth from facts, which makes the Chinese nation confident in facing difficulties and challenges, can analyze problems realistically, and rely on its own strength to solve problems instead of relying on others, thus supporting the spiritual independence of the Chinese nation. On the other hand, the Four Self-confidences have guided and regulated the future development direction of the Chinese nation, thus building an ideological defense line that refuses to depend on others and providing support for the spiritual independence of the Chinese nation. In the history of mankind, no nation or country can achieve strength and rejuvenation by relying on external forces and following others. The result of doing that is not necessarily to fail, or to become a vassal of others (Xi, 2018). The Four Self-confidences give a positive answer to the Chinese nation's flag, road, direction and mental state in the great journey of the present age. This answer stipulates that the Chinese nation will continue to move forward along the road initiated by itself, and guide and regulate the national ideological understanding, thus supporting the spiritual independence of the Chinese nation.

## 5. Conclusion

No matter from the horizontal comparison of countries and nationalities in the world or from the history of the development of the Chinese nation itself, there are not a few political leaders or thinkers who put forward specific spiritual discourses on independence and autonomy, but it is the first time that independence is directly emphasized as the spiritual nature of a nation. It shows that the Chinese nation has upgraded from carrying forward the specific spirit of independence to emphasizing the independence of the whole spiritual world, and realizes that this spiritual independence has an important influence on the politics, ideology, culture and system of a nation and a country, that is, it affects the practice of the whole real society. This change is not only a new formulation in the ideological and cultural field in the general sense, but also contains profound political implications.

Firstly, the proposal of spiritual independence of the Chinese nation reflects the Chinese nation's high self-consciousness and self-determination in spiritual independence, which is a milestone event in the process of its own spiritual development. Putting forward and emphasizing maintaining the spiritual independence of the Chinese nation first shows that a nation's own subjective consciousness is highly awakened, it has a clear consciousness of distinguishing itself from other nations and countries, and it has the consciousness of actively understanding and examining whether its own spirit is attached to others, and it is believed that relying on and attaching to others cannot make itself develop truly. Secondly, the self-determination in spiritual independence emphasizes the need to maintain the independence of national spirit, and puts forward corresponding supporting points, which shows that the Chinese nation consciously and actively maintains its own spiritual independence. Finally, the independence of national spirit is a milestone event in the process of spiritual development. As far as the survival and development of a nation is concerned, not only does it exist in the world in physical sense, but more importantly, it is strong enough in spirit to support its foothold in the forest of nations in the world. Independence is one of the most important dimensions for a nation to be strong or not in spirit. It is not only the ideological basis for a nation to stand in the forest of nations in the world without being assimilated, but also the spiritual characteristics for a nation to thrive in the forest of nations in the world without being eliminated.

Secondly, spiritual independence strengthens the basic idea that the Chinese nation adheres to independence in opening to the outside world. Maintaining spiritual independence of a nation is not going to spiritual isolation. Xi Jinping emphasized that the door of China's opening will not be closed, but will only be opened wider and wider (Xi, 2020). The Chinese nation should absorb foreign essence in opening up to the outside world to make itself stronger and stronger. This absorption is based on the needs of its own development reality, instead of simply abandoning its own tradition and copying others blindly. The proposal of spiritual independence further strengthens China's basic concepts of opening to the outside world and independence, and raises the understanding of this issue to the level of national spiritual development. At the same time, spiritual independence plays a guiding role in the development of a nation and a country. This guiding function is embodied in two aspects: guidance and regulation. On the one hand, when absorbing foreign essence, the independence of national spirit guides the Chinese nation to achieve breakthrough and surpass development; On the other hand, the independence of national spirit regulates that the Chinese nation will not lose itself or be attached to others in its own development by providing a kind of spiritual determination to strengthen its initial intention and direction.

Thirdly, spiritual independence is the embodiment of the independence of a nation and a country at the highest level. The Chinese nation emphasizes its own spiritual independence and upholds the basic proposition of respecting the independence of every nation and country in the world, which is a clear response to the "China Threat Theory" and "China's New Imperialism Theory". First of all, while the Chinese nation proposes to maintain its spiritual independence, it also respects the independence of all nations and countries in the world. The report of

the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China emphasizes that socialism with Chinese characteristics provides a brand-new election for countries and nations in the world who want to accelerate development and maintain their independence (Xi, 2020). The success of the Chinese nation led by the Communist Party of China cannot be separated from its own independence. At the same time, it is believed that any country and nation in the world cannot succeed without its own independence. Secondly, Xi Jinping understands the significance of spiritual independence of every nation and country from the perspective of mutual learning and common development of human civilization. History calls for human civilization to shine together. Different civilizations should coexist harmoniously and complement each other to jointly provide spiritual strength for human development. (Xi, 2017) Exchanges and mutual learning among different civilizations promote the progress of human civilization and the peaceful development of the world. If a country and a nation lose their spiritual independence, then it must only be a highly homogeneous civilization with other nations, and lose the value of exchanging and learning from each other and developing together with other civilizations. Finally, based on the previous two expositions, the arguments such as "China Threat Theory" and "China's New Imperialism Theory" put forward by the old thinking of "National Power Must Dominate" failed to break itself. The media and politicians in some western developed countries always look at China in the way of bullying and colonizing other countries and nations in the rise of their own civilization, so the arguments of "China threat theory" and "China's new imperialism theory" are endless. The proposal of national spirit independence not only makes it clear that the Chinese nation will not be attached to any country or nation, but also respects the independence of all nations in the world, and holds that the cornerstone of mutual exchange and mutual learning of human civilization and common peaceful development is the independence of all nations.

## References

- Cai, S. M., & Zhang, X. (2019). *Spiritual Independence of the Chinese Nation and the Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation Research on Socialism*, 1.
- Chen, Y. S. (2017). *On Enhancing Self-confidence in Values and Maintaining the Spiritual Independence of the Country and Nation, Research on Ethics*, 6.
- Xi, J. P. (2014). *Xi Jinping's Excerpts on Comprehensively Deepening Reform*. Beijing: Central Literature Publishing House, p.88.
- Xi, J. P. (2015). *Speech at the Symposium on Literature and Art Work*. People's Daily, 10-15.
- Xi, J. P. (2015). *Speech at the Symposium on Literature and Art*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, p.26.
- Xi, J. P. (2017). *Building a Better World Together — Keynote Speech at the High-level Dialogue between the Communist Party of China and World Political Parties*. Beijing: People's Publishing House, p.6.
- Xi, J. P. (2017). *Excerpts from Xi Jinping's Discussion on Socialist Cultural Construction*. Beijing: Central Literature Publishing House, p.132.
- Xi, J. P. (2017). *Speech at the Third Nuclear Security Summit and Visiting Four European Countries, UNESCO Headquarters and EU Headquarters*. Beijing: People's Publishing House, p.17.
- Xi, J. P. (2017). Xi Jinping: the governance of China. Beijing: *foreign languages press*, 2, 349.
- Xi, J. P. (2018). *Speech on Celebrating the Forty Years of Reform and Opening-up Conference*. Beijing: People's Publishing House, p.27.
- Xi, J. P. (2018). Xi Jinping: the governance of China. *Beijing: foreign languages press*, 1, 29-260.
- Xi, J. P. (2019). Several Issues on Upholding and Developing Socialism with Chinese Characteristics. *Seeking Truth from Facts*, 7, 4-12.
- Xi, J. P. (2020). Xi Jinping: the governance of China. *Beijing: foreign languages press*, 3, 8-194.
- Xin, M. (2014). "Spiritual Independence" in the Great Renaissance: "Speak Clearly" and "Develop Well" of Chinese Culture. *People's Forum*, 16.

## Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the [Creative Commons Attribution license](#) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.